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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN GOVT WIRE SERVICE MISTAKENLY REPORTS
RULING PARTY TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENT

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

1. (SBU) Egypt's official wire service, the Middle East News Agency (MENA), created brief confusion on 7/26 when it disseminated a text message to mobile phone subscribers which reported that National Democratic Party (NDP) Secretary General Safwat El-Sherif had announced that "The coming conference of the National Party will witness for the first time the election of a new party president."

2. (SBU) According to Mohamed Kamal, NDP spokesman, whom we contacted immediately, Sherif had been misquoted. In fact, said Kamal, the party will be using a new electoral system for its November party elections. The fact that "there will be a new election for the party president doesn't mean the election of a new president."

3. (SBU) Comment: Had the MENA announcement been correct--which it was not--it would have meant that President Hosni Mubarak was stepping down from his party leadership position, a development which have jump-started the succession rumor mill. MENA has already issued a correction (e-mailed to desk), which describes the new party election process. MENA is not having a good day: earlier on 7/26, MENA announced that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il would be making his first ever visit to Egypt. In fact, the North Korean visitor is envoy Kim Jong Nam. MENA has also corrected its mistaken report about the Korean visitor.
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